

THE SEQUOYA REVIEW



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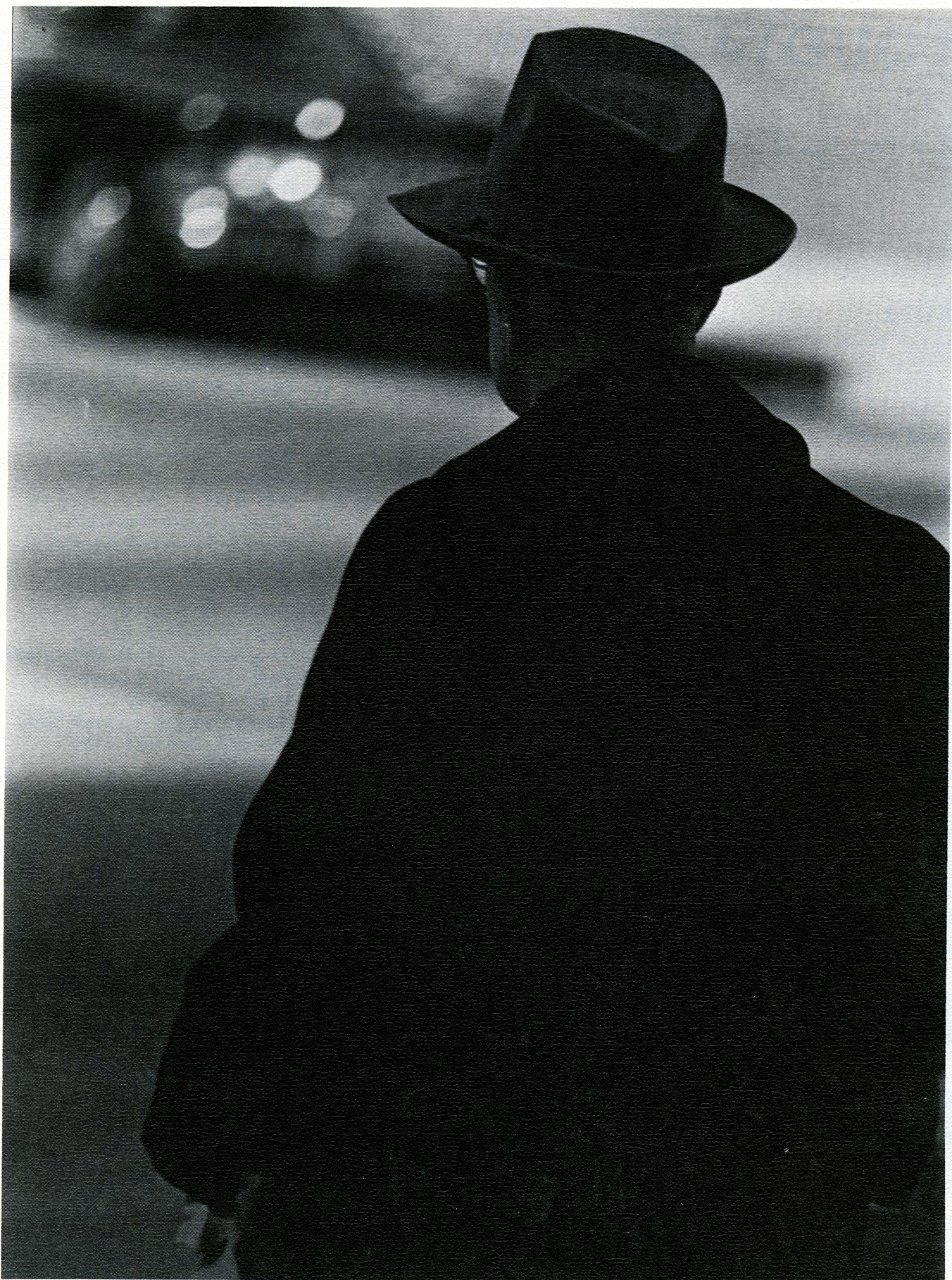
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MANUELLO A. OVALLES — AS TIME GOES BY

PRIZE-WINNING POEMS BY TERRY FUGATE

TRIPTYCH FOR PROHIBITION

PART ONE: STILL ANOTHER OLD GUITARIST

My fingers grew accustomed
to bleeding. Call it
an occupational hazard.
I struggled for years
with impossible chords
dreaming of whiskey and women.

I paid for my fame.
In the club my wrists would swell
as if from arthritis, tendons
throbbing while the crowd would call
for "that old country sound"
or "Amazing Grace."
I'd forge metal to maple
and stagger to the bar.
But I carried my wounds like a man.

Now that I have a great guitar
I find I don't have an audience.
You see, now this county is dry,
and since the people quit drinking
their marriages are solvent
and they've forgotten what it means
to listen.

TRIPTYCH FOR PROHIBITION
PART TWO: SONG OF SID THE BARTENDER

I used to make money. Damn good money.
After the shop let out at five,
I'd have 'em drunk by six.
It was public service.

I spent bundles on dancing girls.
I'd even take care of the Nedcurl twins,
those hare-lips who'd spend
their last dime to feel alive.

My bar held this town together.
Now no one's got a reason to smile.
Just ask the old soldier who walks around
trading war tales with his hound.

Back then we had music, this guitarist
who always bitched about his equipment.
He'd play "Amazing Grace"
and everybody would stand up at once

and sing till they were blue.
Now if you want to sing
you have to stand in the rain
and let thunder be your applause.

TRIPTYCH FOR PROHIBITION
PART THREE: JAMES

1.
I thought I'd never get over it.
I'd panic at 5, wondering
what I was going to do. I mean,
the boys were everything to me:
Sam with his widow jokes and Joe
with war tales we knew weren't true.
(But if you didn't let him tell them,
he'd sic that dog on you.)
Who voted this county dry anyway?

Most of us get by.
Some have taken up fishing
while others have taken up God.
But there are problems.
Slim's wife can't stand him
when he's sober. I found Joe
crouched in front of the grammar school
screaming he heard shells
and that there was a soldier
dying in his foxhole.
But most of us get by.

2.
I see things differently now.
Little things. Like how the fan
bobs from side to side like an old
boxer. The other night I watched my wife
as she slept and I realized how a man
neglects what he wants the most
once he has it. I touched her soft
breasts and brown hair,
softer than any I've known,
and when I whispered to her dreams
she answered with a sigh
as warm as a midnight sun.



EILEEN CARD

IF YOU SEE A COLUMBINE, TELL ME

When all we have are glimpses of needles
as they fall from pines onto snow,
we try to recall the names of spring:
crabapple, juniper, birch.

Sometimes we can hear the moles,
nails clicking, claw for cicadas.
Clara says survival is
the only light they know.

I can see the frozen stream
where toads and deer fed last summer
while her sister and I
clutched under a three-quarter moon.

Whatever song the crickets sang is buried in snow.

Monique sent Clara a porcelain buck
and a book on winter gardening.
Clara says the firs are always faithful.
She packs their mulch in plastic and foil,
swearing they must endure their hunger.

She watches the buzzards swoop.
Everything now, she says, is longing and silence.
Even the moon refuses to loose its grip on the sky.
Later, she'll cross butterwort and monkshood
and give the hybrids names no one can pronounce.

TERRY FUGATE



TODD BOWEN

THE FIND

I never thought I would want
to come back
to these sun baked mountains
of sagebrush grass and juniper trees
where the Shoshone scavenged
for buffalo berries and currants.
Here
the moments scatter
like Chinese tea leaves
catching the northern winds
to Canada
to the caribou-dotted tundra
and farther
to the midnight sun
I wish we'd had
the day we planted
and you taught me
the curve of your back.
This pragmatic people
traveling in small bands
building shelters of branches
against the night,
sky of Merak and Canopus
burning a passage
in a single breath
through five hundred years
finds me here
unable to find
a way back to you.

LAURINDA LEE

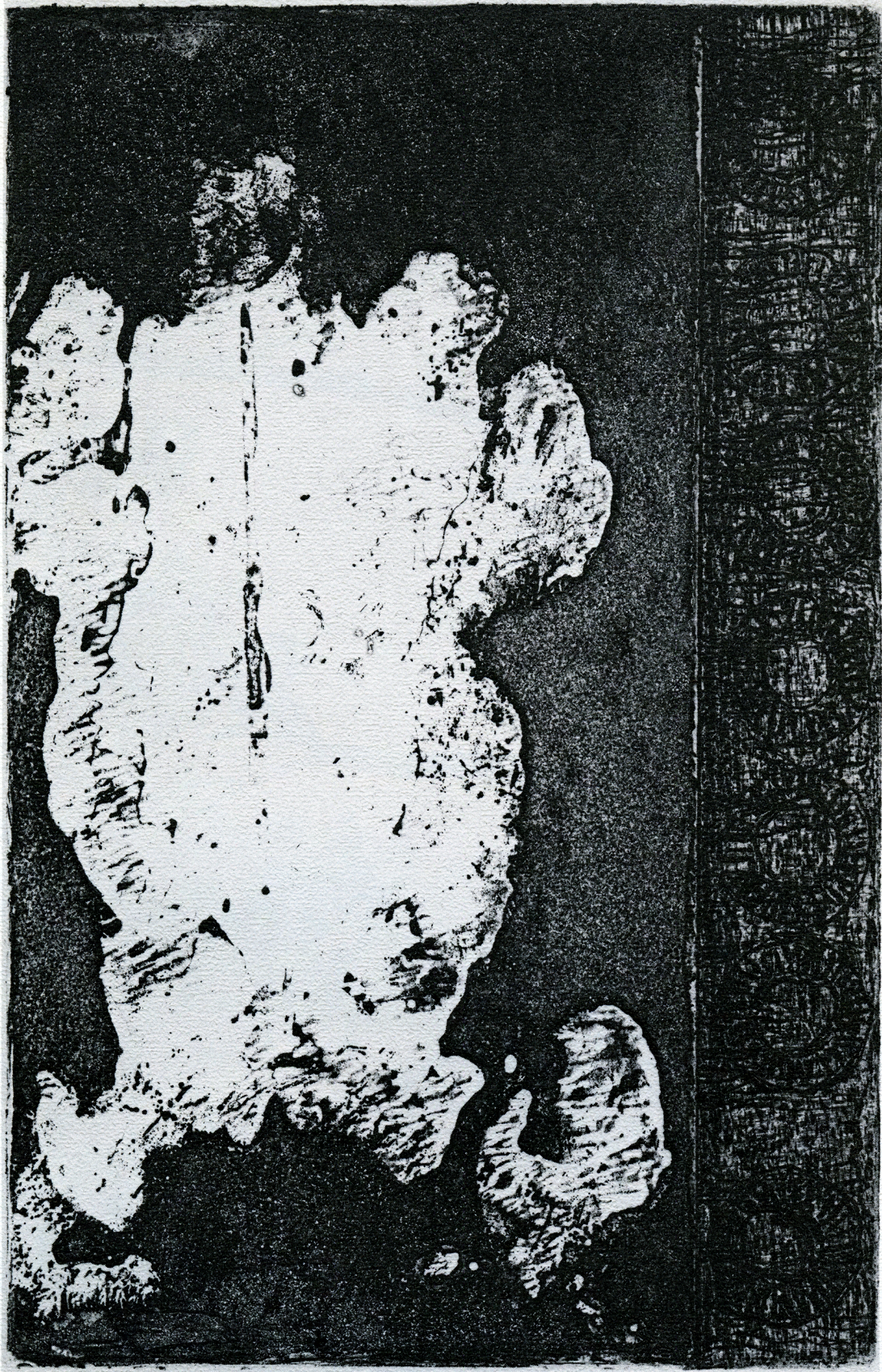
PHOTOGRAPHER

The light is wrong.
I step over a broken fence,
frame the rusted Pontiac,
a locust's shell in this forgotten field.

A great horned owl
sleeps almost invisible
in a window's glare.

Suddenly, the car falls to its fenders.
The hood slams shut.
The boy with the beer can steps out,
eyes me suspiciously.
I kneel to catch the afternoon sky, cautious,
anxious to move on.

LIZ ALBERT

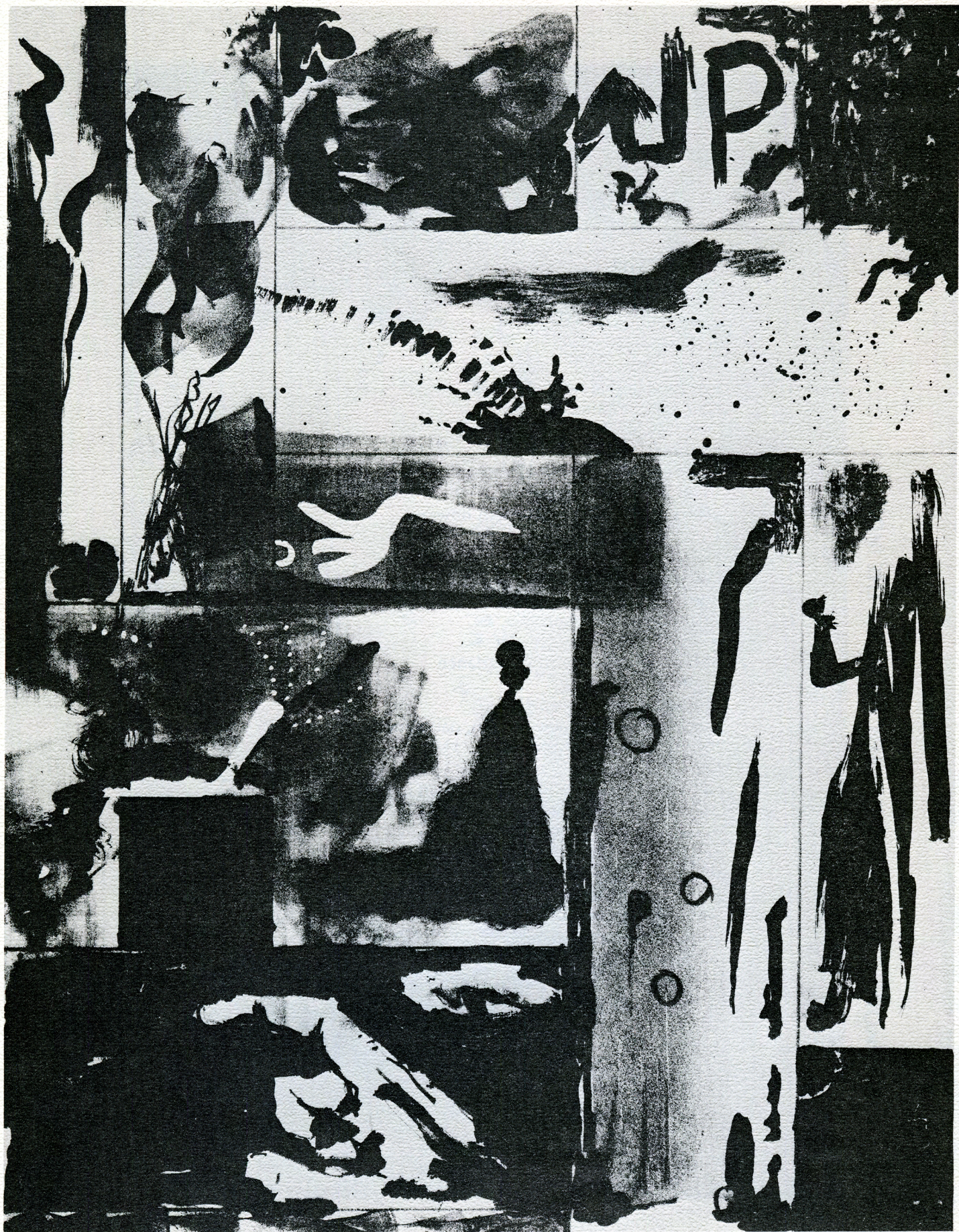


HOWARD CANNON — ISLANDIA AND SEVEN SUNS FOR THE INDIES

LEAF BOOKS

We still find them falling
in unexpected countries
of the *Atlas*:
a maple leaf hiding the Sahara,
a pin oak pointing out
the capitals of Eastern Europe.
We pressed the leaves
for scientific names -
angiosperm, gymnosperm,
plants with cones, plants with flowers.
To us it was a game,
the names were spells.
Wahoo, spindletree,
bottlebrush buckeye.
Chanting in a thicket
we might meet the whisper
of the *satinleaf*, the tropical dance
of the *gumbo limbo*.
But it was Tennessee,
the woods we knew were elm, oak, pine.
Except the sultry afternoon
behind the depot
we came across the handsome Asian import
monkey puzzle, branches twisted
crazy angles on our sky.
Seedy cones disintegrated in our hands,
the needles on the road home -
which is why, today,
we find this species alone
spread to ten new states
of the *Atlas*.

JEANNE PERRY



ED BRUNER — ONLY A TEST
PRIZE WINNER

HONORABLE MENTION

REPEATED DAWNS

Father had to keep moving. I sometimes think of when
he taught me how to set up our tent
so that the wind wouldn't catch it,
and rain would drain away without leaking in.
I could do it again if I had to.
A person's only family is within.

We stopped here for a few weeks last year and soon
I told him I had met a boy, you, and
wept that I would stay through repeated dawns
because a person's only family is within.
I tell you this because my weeping wasn't real -
don't be fooled, I'm more like him than you know.

Take the days slowly; don't think of me as yours.
Think of the soil that locks your own dead ancestors
in rows of quiet envy, and try
to understand their lonely silence.
It's my obligation as your wife to tell you
that a person's only family is within.

He had to keep moving. I sometimes think of when
I waved goodbye with my right hand,
saving the other for you, for the way
you hold it now though my weeping isn't real.
Sometimes I think I'll stay through repeated dawns.
A person's only family is within.

JAMI WOLF



HOWARD CANNON

NIGHT ALTERATIONS

While your head floats on the pillow,
your heart whispers
to the sleeper his secrets:

“You are a painter,”
he says softly,
and he holds the ladder.
Squinting upward, he cannot see
how your hands tremble and grip
the ends of the two tall, white, wooden beams
which, to him, appear
to be giant chopsticks in his hands.

“You’re not a painter,”
he dictates from below,
“you’re a bamboo shoot,”
and he spreads his arms
and you drop, motionless
through a deep blurred world
until you land
on top of him

in your bed. Instantly you shake
your head awake and tell him
nothing.

JENNY ARTHUR

FOUR TALISMEN

One slender blood-bronze
leaf from the peach tree
that fell on clean snow;
the reflection of a white
cloud on a freshet
running over smooth stones;
wine puckered-to-bursting
berries on the garnet stem
of an Elder bush, and —
an albino bat I saw once,
on her back in barn straw,
immobilized by the ecstasy
of nursing two black infants.

MARY COCKE

THE WORD

Obscure, capricious,
it hides in an
unabridged dictionary,
basking in anonymity
while somewhere
in a small, florescent room
a tidy man with shadowed eyes
and three severe children
invents a meaning for
lumbricoid.

JAMI WOLF

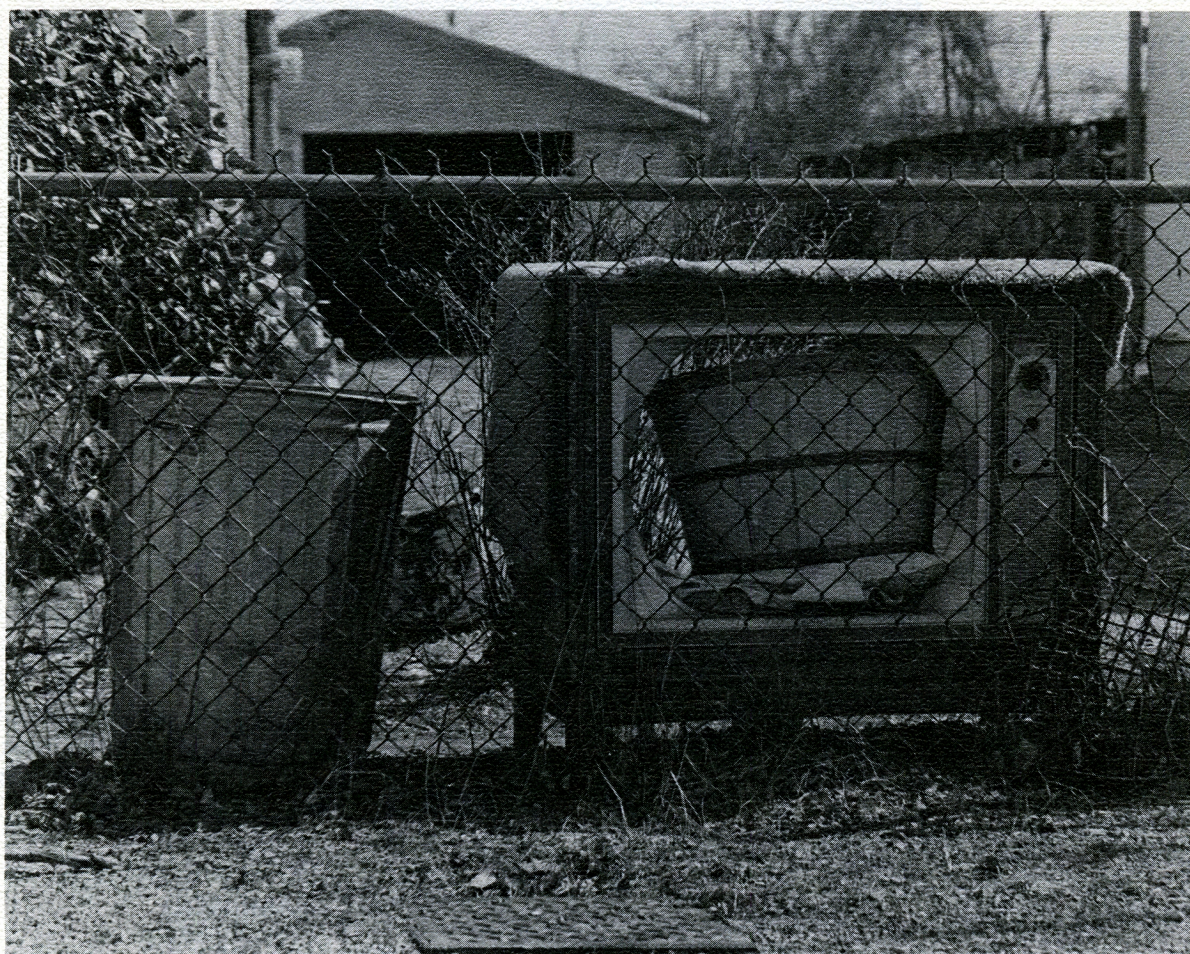
NOTE FROM TENNESSEE

I'm still here in Tennessee
waiting daily for your words.
It's summer now.
At night katydids scream,
a June bug fights against my window.

Last June I was with you
on a cold Michigan lake,
trolling, hoping for bass.

Your words, like silt, sift slowly down
meaning more and less than
lines inked on paper.
You talk of a sudden warmth up North,
mosquitos feasting on Michigan thick blood.
Here my blood runs thin.

SUSAN HALL HERPORT



ELEGY

-After Tranströmer

I pass by the gate.
It is tall and white,
and opens to an English garden.
A bus passes outside brick walls
and jars the tea cups.

I pass by the second gate.
Sisters! The shadows in that park
stretch their limbs to you -
swallow you up.

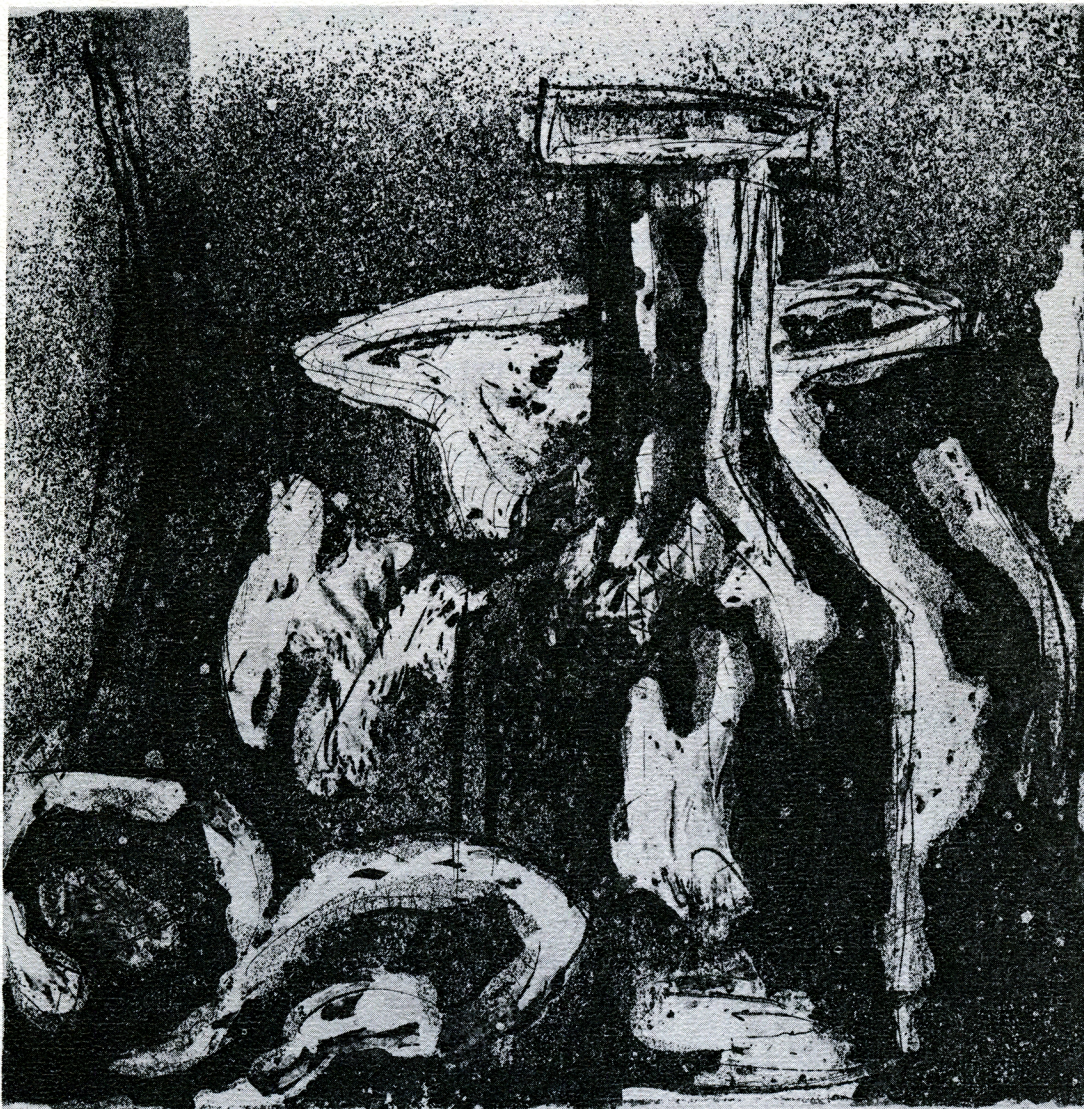
The third gate. A wide cemetery.
Beyond it, a river.
Starshine in the water.
Strange continuities of thought.

RACHEL LANDRUM CRUMBLE

FLORIDA

The trip was chance
when most things were firm. Pure luck
to find the acres of open road
accidentally stacked in a line
flat enough to drive on. Still
distant, I look at things for you:
hawk barns and swallow's eyes
to either side
in a cracker county no one remembers
or cares to name.
Sometimes a farmer
holding truth like a bottle
does a slow pinwheel jig
in a ditch.
He is suspicious of stars.
His farm is a collection of dirt clods,
wet shingles, and lichen.
He throws us a line,
the night settling in a stream
through the back roads south of Georgia.

DAVID FRANKE



TIM ALLMON — STILL LIFE

THE HUNTSMAN

In the haze of morning
they ride. Extended
the whip curls to crack
keeping yearlings on the track
of two leading bitches until
at the edge of the wood
the huntsman sights the fox.
His calves press deeper
into ribs to find a still point
between the reach and push
of each stride lunging toward flight
through branches whipping his face.
He bows close to the arched neck
watching leaves and ground blur
to a dark ugly tweed
tearing through the mad web to an open
freshly plowed field
where he feels her starting to slip,
starting to fold her haunches.
He seems weightless
calves loosed
the sky clearer now
just whisps, horse tails
and a skater on blue ice
cradling the sun in the arch
of her back.
Wingtips of an angling crow
slip past his fingers
as his mare
presses him to the soft earth.

LAURINDA LEE

A SOUL TO KEEP

She lay stiff-backed on her narrow bed,
her eyelids creased shut against dark forms before her,
a statue of the Infant of Padua,
her school uniform on the back of a chair.
Fears played through her mind to the tune of the Tantum Ergo.

She chews the host, it bleeds in her mouth,
the crucifixion is hers.
She realizes she has broken the fast,
and returns to her pew,
the sisters know she has sinned.
They frown from beneath starched wimples and black veils.
She had best be careful at the crosswalk.
Her mother refuses conversion.
Fire will consume her eternally.

Tonight as always there are demons beneath her bed.
They are ready to possess her like the Cure of Ars.
She clutches her rosary, says the beads.
The sisters told her the demons will run
from the crucifix and the name of Jesus.

SUSAN HALL HERPORT

BERNE

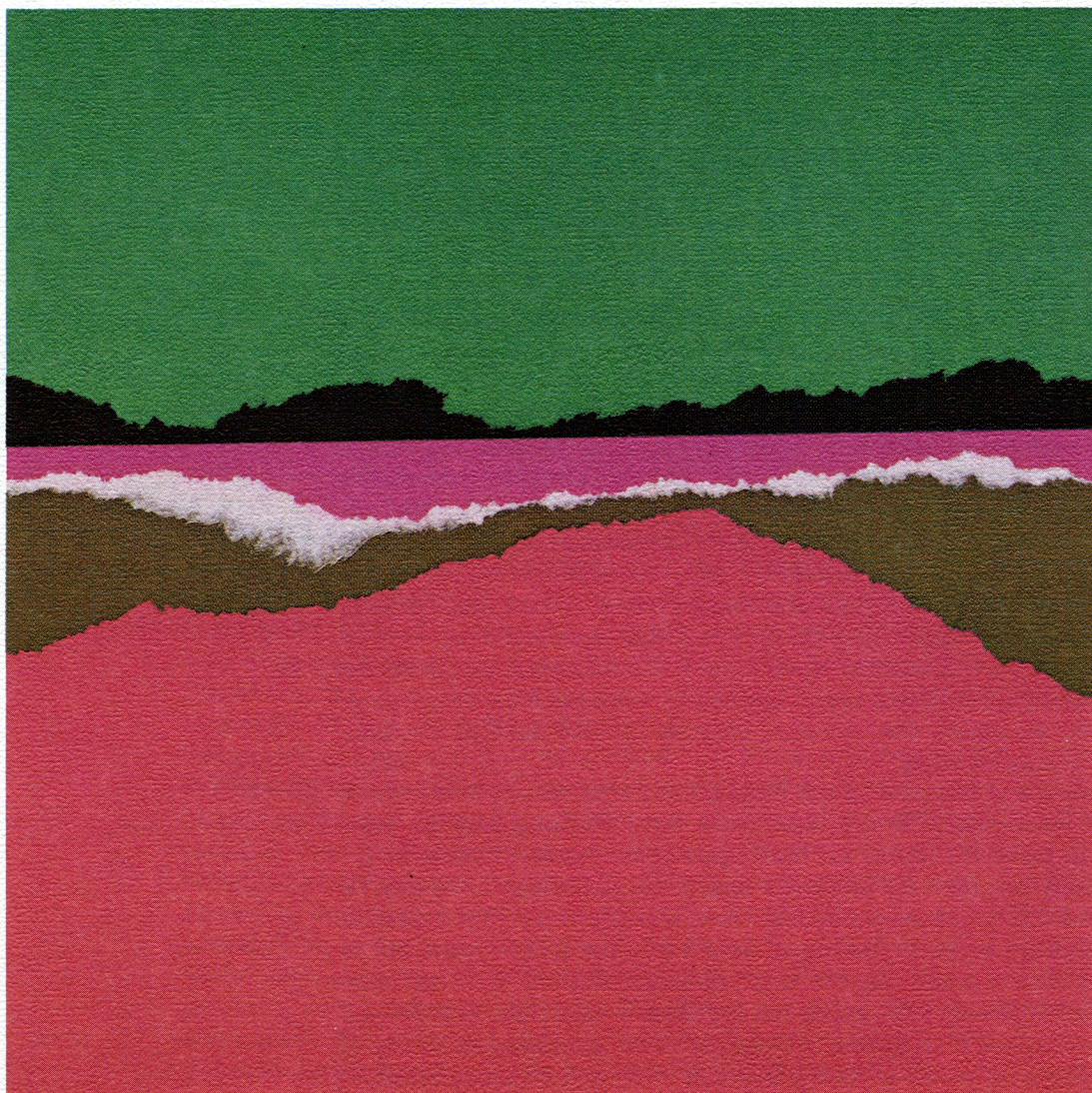
Through the flatlands, everything
a dried brown sameness, the grey horizon
outlining fields and silos. Now this town,
surrounded by farms, somehow different.
You would think, things might have changed.

It is noon. They are gathered for their meal.
Wagons pulled up to the big house.
Around it plainer homes clustered on one acre of land.
In the yard, laundry strung in rows.
Ahead another big house. More wagons.

Once I drove through at night.
Each window showed the faint yellow glow of kerosene.
And today the scrubbed pink face of a young man begins to show beard.

Past the farms, the small town lies flat and plain.
The post office, white clapboard, where for forty years
the post mistress has pushed stamps beneath the wrought iron grate.
She isn't one of them.
The man she loved was killed at Le Teil.
At night a light glows there too.
At night she sorts through dead mail.

SUSAN HALL HERPORT



HOWARD CANNON — UNTITLED

THE VIEW

The blind girl sings
because no one can hear her.

She leans like a shadow
against the gnarled fir
on top of the bluff.

When she speaks
it is to say how she remembers
sweeping up the loose clay that stuck
to her porch like sugar
when it rained.

I wanted to tell her how I always
covered my eyes to sing or to spell,
how this late afternoon,
the maple trees bloom slowly
with light.

LIZ ALBERT

A PLAY IN PROGRESS: PROLOGUE
BY CHUCK SCOTT

Empty stage, blackness (except for a single white spot upstage left). Under the light is Paul. He may perform the prologue in as wide a variety of bodily positions as he chooses.

PAUL:

I'm going to interrupt here. Shatter the silence. The rumbling. The noise of the street outside. Whatever. Why? Well, I need to speak of this thing called desire. Thus, my decision to stop things for the moment. You may come to me if there are any complaints. (Pause). But this thing called desire. It's something we all have. It goes way back to our ancestors, those hairy apes, or whatever they were. Yes, they had desire: very basic, of course, eating, sleeping and the other, the big one, everyone knows about it, or maybe they don't think they know, but they do. It's all deep down inside men somewhere. All those desires are. In everyone. Even the President—Washington (we know why he was the father of this country), Teddy Roosevelt (Old Rough and Ready)—they all had those desires. Harry Truman had several ways to give them Hell. Other people did too—Hitler, Ghandi, St. Francis of Assisi. Cut these people open and those libidinous desires would spill out on the ground like blood and water. Even the man who created our beloved hairy ancestors, the apemen, Charles Darwin, he had the same shocks shooting about his body.

You want to know a secret, one of the most quietly kept stories in the world these days? That little man in Rome. You know him? The one with all those colorful clothes to make his skinny rat body appear so colossal? I know he is a skinny rat; I saw him in a play once on center stage in his underwear! Anyway. He has desires just like the President or anyone. Now, you might say, "Of course he does, Paul, he was born on earth. He began here. He is human in nature, but he doesn't have the, uh, the other one, the, uh, 'you know' desire." But I do know. "But," I say, "you are wrong. Oh yes, he has that desire. Especially that desire." Can you imagine the poor man having to keep such a thing cooped up all day, all year, always wrapped up inside all those layers of clothes? Of course, thinking harder, I've heard that underneath his swirling robes Rodin's statue of Balzac that stands in Paris is masturbating. So maybe the little man in Rome has it quite good. There are many beautiful young girls attending communion these days. Many more than see Rodin's statue of Balzac. I don't know those people who told me of Balzac also said that dirt was purple at times and snow was often a bluish grey. They were crazy, but spoke very persuasively. I like to believe that they were right about old Balzac. I like to think I'm right about the Pope. Or the President, or prime minister, or president of the Politbureau. They would all serve the same purpose. Even Santa Claus would do, but he's not a real person, well that is *not really*, although I used to tell my son . . . leave cookies under the tree . . . I ended up eating them myself as if I were . . . God, I don't believe . . . But I am rambling on, which I have a tendency to do.

Anyway, I actually wanted to speak of a particular desire belonging to me. I don't think I can name it yet. I can smell it sometimes. During the winter it smells like turpentine, during the summer it mellows out to blackberry wine, by the fall it has turned to chimney smoke, in spring it seems to disperse altogether. Sometimes I wake at night and hear it pacing the basement below, or sneezing in the alley I just came from, or lifting the sewage lid I just stepped on. I never looked back. One night it went as far as to crawl in bed with me, and slept all night by my feet, snoring into my ankles. By morning it was gone. Flown the coop. But my mind had been altered. I no longer feared turning around to face it. I had to get a grip on this thing. This desire. You'll soon see how far it has dragged me. Very far. Much further than out of bed and out of my house. But, you see, I

must capture this thing. Cage it in my hands. Taste it, breathe into it, spit on it. Of course, you might ask very reasonably “how did such an idea get into your head, Paul?” (A *laugh* from blackness, upstage. Paul barely notices). I will tell you.

It started, I believe, as a by-product of all those primal desires I already said something of. But where exactly? It starts in that place where some say exists the root of all evil. (The same laugh again: Paul pretends not to be annoyed). Where is this place? There? (Pointing to groin). Not there. Get your thoughts out of the sewer, or am I asking too much. Where, then? Why, up hear, numbskull, the brain. You think I’m crazier than those Balzacians, No? But please do not go away, not yet. The brain. The old bean. The grey matter is where the root of all evil makes his living, takes his meals, screws his wife, whose identity I’m less uncertain of. (Laugh from upstage. Paul turns around to look.) Nothing. Oh well. But back to what is at hand. I know what you are thinking. You’re thinking: “Too noble a place, Paul, the head, the alter of this temple of God our body. Up there it is clean, bright, fresh, the grey matter is actually sparkling ivory white.” You’re saying, “Go back to the other place, Paul, the first you pointed to (Laugh). That is where evil begins. There’s your root of all evil. There’s where the seed first sprouts. (Laugh.) There it is dirty, a place full of waste, vermin-infested.” (Paul scratches his balls) That doesn’t bother me. I know enough to know that ivory, at least in an elephant where it ought to be is about as sparkling white as my teeth. (He smiles, big). See? (Laugh, Paul storms into blackness). (In blackness) I’m sorry I couldn’t control. (Re-entering light) Nothing.

But, did you see, see my teeth, All yellow, black, red. Maybe dirt is purple. Perhaps Balzac masturbates. Anyway, the matter in your head is grey, and that is okay. And what of down here, where you say lurks all the vermin? That is okay too. I’ve lived in vermin and waste quite a while now. Most things have. Those beautiful Arabian horses you spend millions on love stomping around in it. So do those pigs and cows you carve up and consume like peas. Those beautiful roses wouldn’t be so big and colorful without growing up in shit. Hell, I once had a friend who said human beings themselves were but the randomly dropped waste products of God himself. Maybe my friend went too far. He was a good companion. He drowned one night taking a bath. A light fixture above him jerked out of its screws. Hit him right on the top of the head. He went under and never came back up. “A beautiful metaphor, his life,” we said while digging a hole for him to be placed in. What I was saying though is up here, down there, there is no difference. (Laugh: Paul tries to ignore it). Oh, Jesus, he is back. Well there is a difference between up here and down there but it is not exactly one of black and white, heaven and hell, wet and dry. (Laugh) Oh my God. You see the two are connected. They depend on one another. Up here the spark, down there the wood, God knows where the fire might be, though I’d enjoy imagining it to be . . . (Waits for laugh, it does not come). It’s like one man throws the other catches, one turns knob the other pushes door. They’re working together, you see? (Laugh) I’m warning you to stop this foolish noise. You’re screwing up my thinking. Does anyone know who that is? (Laugh). Oh, Jeez, let’s forget him or try to. (Laugh). So anyway, now you know where I believe this thought to have started. (Laugh). We must then begin on the difficult journey of capturing this thing. This desire. (Laugh continues throughout rest of prologue, in a sense overtaking it). We must start moving, we must go somewhere. I would like to paint you a picture or write a poem describing this thing better. But we have no time. And I am no artist. So we must get moving. We must go back. yes, back to the beginnings, those primal desires: eating, sleeping, the other one. Back to those apes. (A laugh) Shut up! To the sand! The beach! The water (Laugh) I am coming for you! (To Audience) Excuse me, one moment. (Wanders into blackness). We will go to the beach, the water, the ocean, oh yes, back to the ocean, swimming freely in salty water . . .

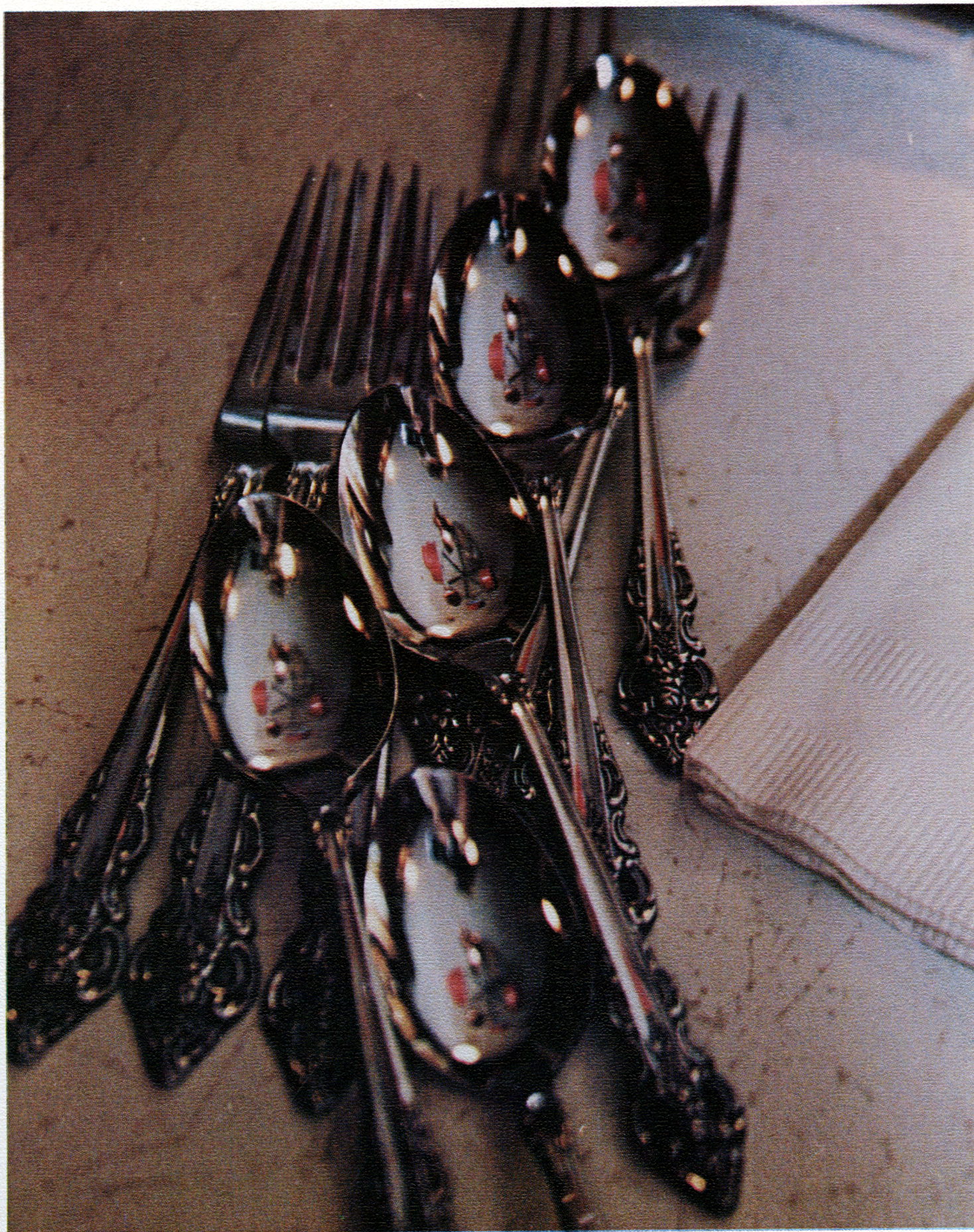
LIGHT GOES OUT INTO . . . ACT ONE.



GEORGE CONLEY



KATHY COFER — HONORABLE MENTION



BETTYE LONAS — REFLECTION SURPRISE II
PRIZE WINNER



CAM BUSCH — GENESIS

NOW

In the town the children
are not what they wanted to be —
a girl wanted to be a nurse
but is a waitress, a boy wished for a horse
but got a Buick.

Here spring falls from the sky
for keeps. You never have money
till the end of the month.

Each summer you taste the salt
on your lips and promise forever —
and the squirrels snicker
knowing what you are in for.
The road and the river
are what they always will be.

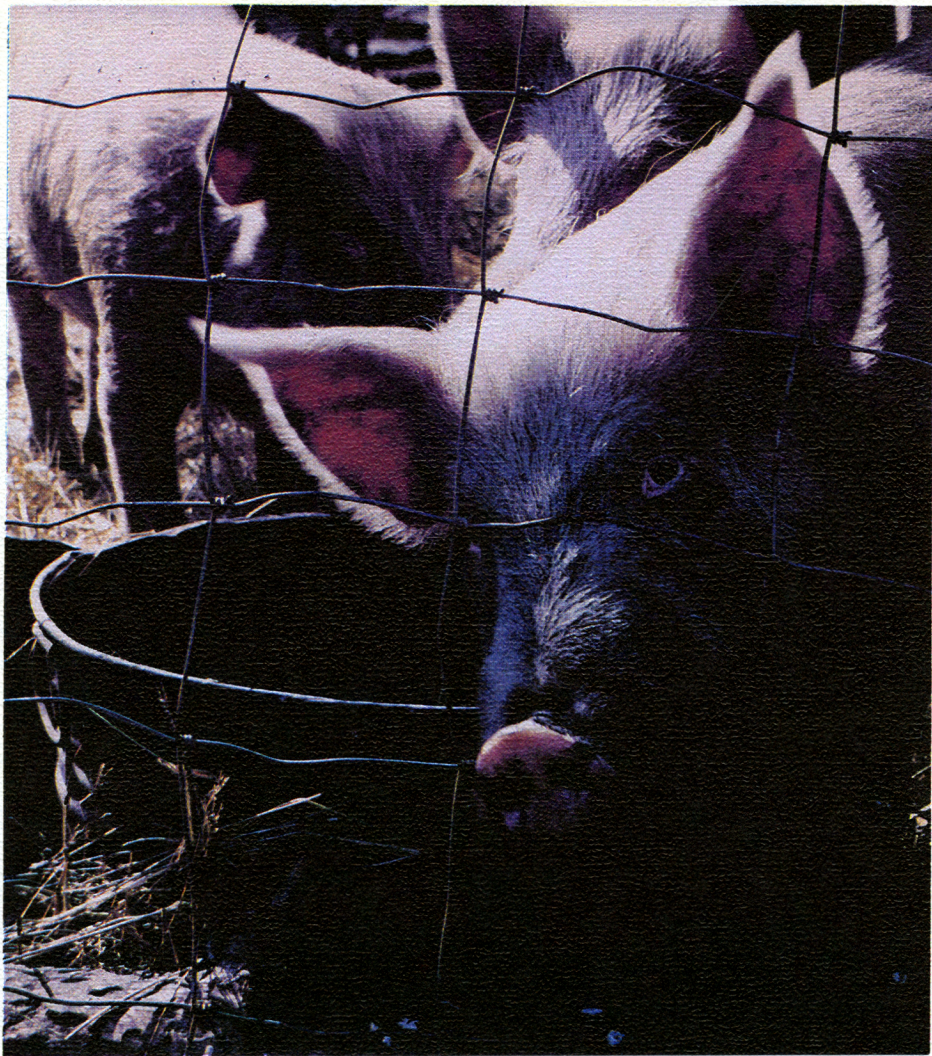
TIM ENSIGN

WATCHING DITCHES

Water runs through the ditch,
over rocks. The black boy dares to get his
feet wet and the others follow
to the face of the tunnel. They yell *wah-hoo*
into the tunnel and it answers
wah-hoo, wah-hoo, wah-hoo.

After a while they get bored or maybe
hungry and run up the bank, hard racing,
they are gone. The water running
through the tunnel is all I hear,
too quiet. I sneak down
to the face of the tunnel and whisper
wah-hoo
and it answers
wah-hoo, wah-hoo, wah-hoo,
and then I sneak back,
missing every rock.

TIM ENSIGN



LAURA WALKER

THE MEXICAN SEX MACHINE

The old man
Who works the Mexican Sex Machine
Is blind.
Hunched at the Machine
His feet work the pedals.
He can't see the figures in the Machine,
But he knows what they do.
The rhythmic clicking
reminds him. Every day
A deaf peasant
Oils the linkages and gears
While the Machine is still moving.
But the figures inside are hidden.
In a simple parody of life
The figures twist and rise
And fall. They throw
Their wooden hips together,
Click,
And bounce apart.

RICH BAILEY

LETTER TO DAVID FROM ATLANTA

I wanted to retouch the photograph,
the three of us standing arms encircled;
but looking at the picture now
I can only see the mountain in the background.
We faded, bleeding to the edges
like the trillium and phacelia I photographed
all the clusters distortions of whites, reds and purples.
For a year I tried to change the house, the yard, my hair,
but still somewhere in the back of my mind were
the long nights in the hospital, the over-brewed coffee,
the final rumbling breath.

PATRICIA STEELE

HATCHER MOUNTAIN

It was an easy walk at first
following Abram's Creek
to the abandoned logging road.
Once wagons and flat bed trucks
hauled timber from these forests
yellow poplar, birch, red oak,
marked, cut and stacked,
the push for sunlight ended.

But everything tells you about its struggle.
A wild boar rooting had torn the dirt
and scattered Rhododendron leaves.
Close to the path a doe watched us carefully
our sound and smell invading
even the screech owl's night.
In the cold we sat huddled, sharing wine,
counting the stars differently.

PATRICIA STEELE



SALLY CUNNINGHAM

ADVICE TO AUTUMNAL PAINTERS

At the time of most color
use the least — concentrate:
where the hemlocks drip down
the smokey bluffs
a single sweet gum
shivers in a low cloud,
assorted stars blowing into the valley.

Avoid over-using crows,
blue streams, winding roads.

Keep a song in mind I suggest
“The Dark Town Strutters’ Ball”
on an out-of-tune piano
in a beer joint near the river.

The house should be empty,
the people a mile away
walking on the crumbling railroad bridge.
Never-mind the bridge.
Catch the sound of the train
trembling in a darkened window.

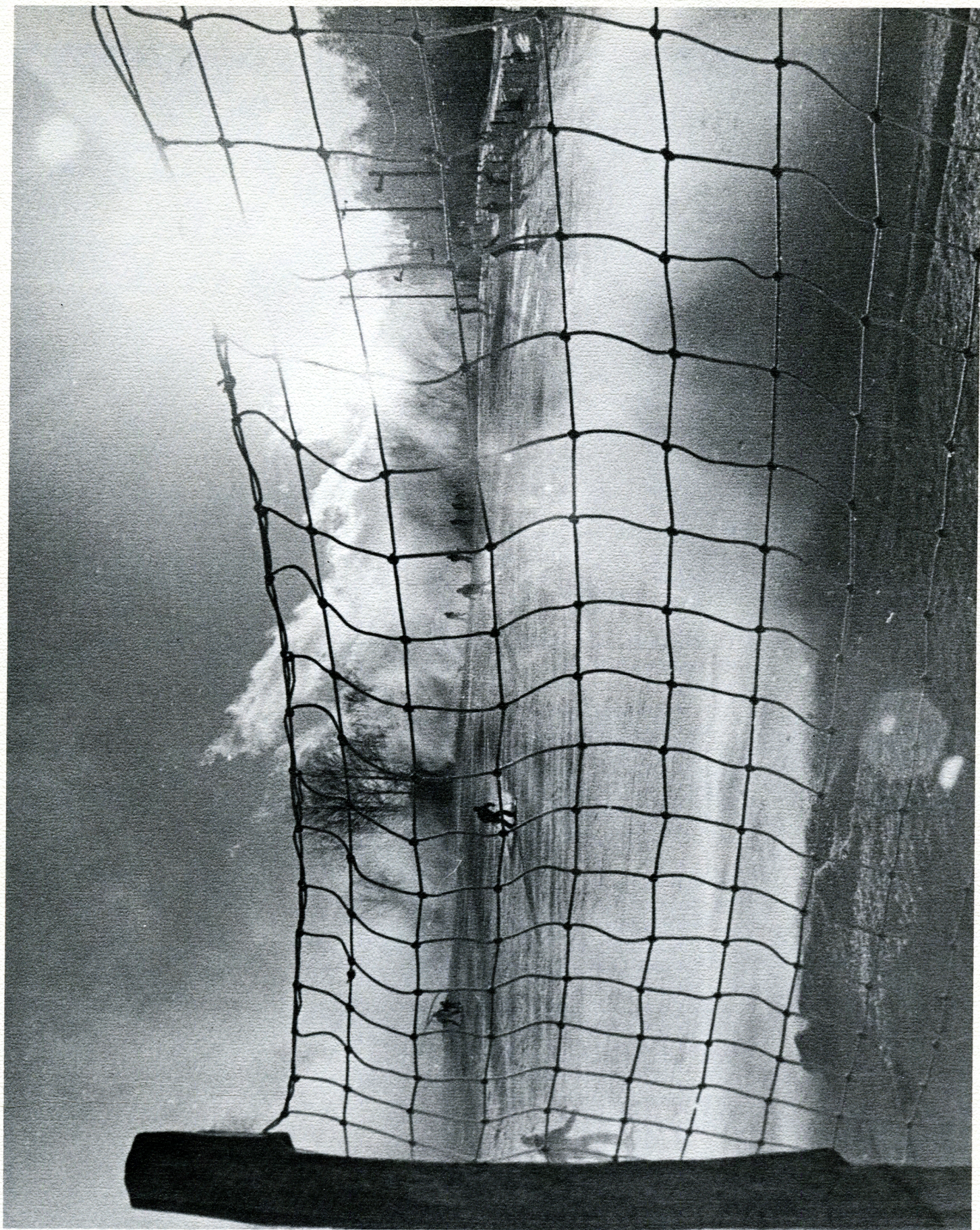
The thickets should look
plump with mourning doves;
any animal seen should be frightened.

Make sure that the quilt
on the porch rail
has a name like Monkey Wrench,
The Drunkard’s Path,
Lott’s Creek Rose.

Every apple must be bruised.

Lose something as you go along
echos of a hammer on the roof,
brassy smells of an old watch,
a taste of persimmons.

JEANNE PERRY

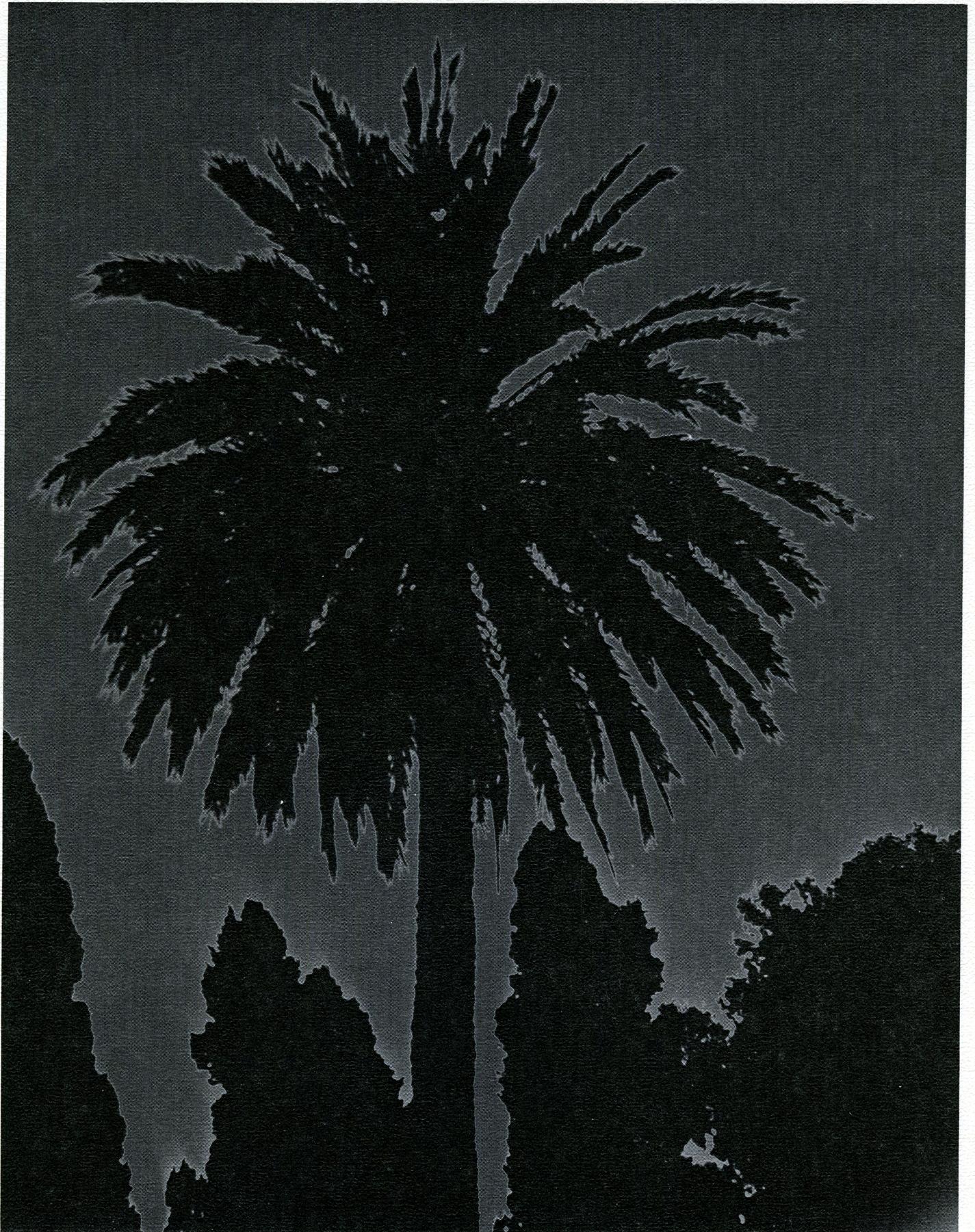


MONTY RIGSBY

LETTER FROM KEY WEST

At night here, the waves slide along the sand
outside my tent, sounding like air
being let out of bicycle tires.
I've been eating too much.
I hang around the docks during the afternoons,
watching the tourists try not to look
like tourists. I wear bright colors
and a wide brimmed hat. The natives treat me
with indifference. They all have tans
that will one day shrivel them up
into tiny, dry reflections of themselves
selves which have no recollection
of sun and shade, or the shrill fighting
of gulls by the pavillion.
They smile a lot here, especially the men
who sell shells in colorful stands
along the beach.
I bought a piece of white coral today.
The salesman told me not to put it in an aquarium
because the bleach would kill the fish.
There's a brooding look to the sky now —
unusual for summer in the Keys.
The mosquitos are as bad as ever.
When I try to sleep, they join together
in a falsetto symphony outside my screen,
and if I listen for very long,
my skin starts to itch,
as if from sea salt.
Last night the feeling was too much,
and I suppose I went a little crazy,
dashing into the night with a can of "Off"
like a misguided militiaman.
It took me an hour to find the way
back to the tent, and when I finally climbed
back into my sleeping bag,
the din seemed louder than ever.
I don't know why, but I found it oddly
comforting to know that I hadn't changed
anything in my moment of madness.
I must confess that I thought of you then,
and I wondered how often your moments of madness
change things before you have time
to realize what you're doing?

JAMI WOLF



NANCY HAILE — HONORABLE MENTION

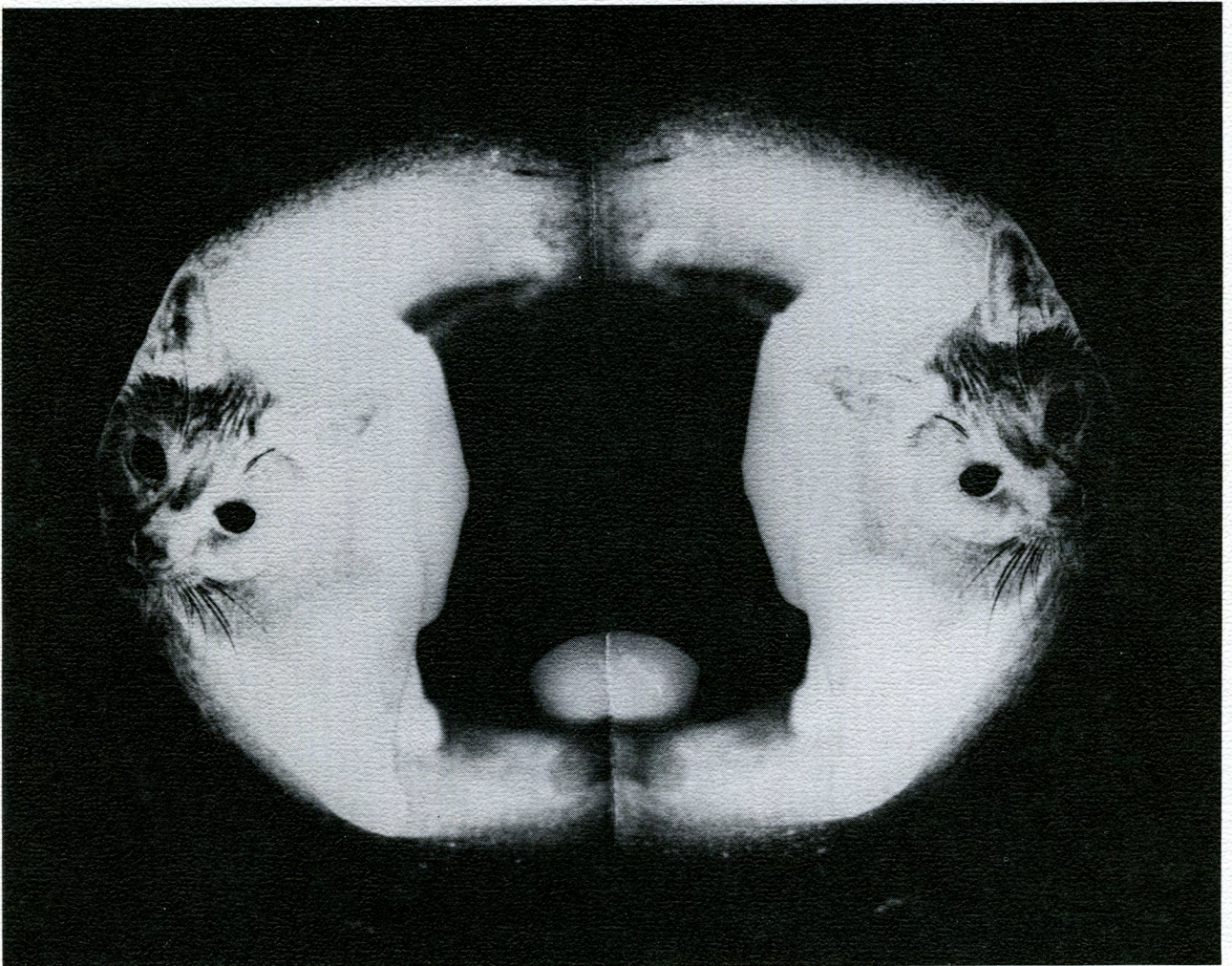
THE WELL

The broken child
curls like burning paper
in the bottom of a dry well
she has stumbled into.
Her thumbnails like beetles
brush the foot
of her headless doll.

She barely sees
through the brick scope
of the well how the blue spikes
of vervain circle the jay's nest.

The child dreams the well is made of twigs.
She wants to wrap and nurse the doll.
Silence holds her hand.

LIZ ALBERT



STEPHANIE FOHL — TIME AND SPACE

WISH

-after Charles Simic

When a star falls through the sky
and no one is around
to catch its descent, the other stars
have to do all the laughing.

They laugh so hard that they drop
dead, and turn black,
which, as you already know, is the color
of the unseen.

JENNY ARTHUR

FOR LEAH

Once in the desert
I watched
The sad army of saguaros
March toward dusk.

Wind blew dust along the road.

I was homesick for somewhere
And wondered where the wind went,
Why it came at dusk.

Love, don't you wonder
From the sad safety of home
When the wind rattles the windows?

There are only moments,
Memories of moments,
And wind
Blowing dust along the road.

DAVID ROBINSON

POEM

The stars are smaller here, and
farther away than they were in Mississippi.
Summers, I used to creep down
the elephant's ear tree
and watch them from beneath the forsythias.
Those bushes grew as big as trees
are here, and bloomed all
summer long.
They used to fill up with rain
and drip brown water.
Bugs crawled out of them,
and squirmed down my face
to the ground.
The dirt was as wet
and salty as sweat.
It tasted of mold.

CAMILLA VONHOLLEN

PRIZE WINNER

ATTACKING THE OBVIOUS: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF EUCLIDEAN GEOMETRY (OR) EUCLID FREED FROM ALL TRUTH

BY RICH BAILEY

Until the 19th century, Euclidean geometry held the position of a privileged text in the discourse of Western thought. Despite the fact that flaws existed which had been apparent to Euclid and eventually to several hundred “hypercritical thinkers” (Kline, p. 411), for 2000 years Euclid’s *Elements* were held as a standard of absolute truth. Hundreds of mathematicians examined the postulate which contained the fault in the surest of human creations, yet they questioned only the rationalization of Euclid’s system, never its truth. What finally happened to Euclidean geometry in the 19th century at the hands of mathematicians such as Gauss, Bolyai, Lobachevsky, and Riemann is very similar to a recent development in literary criticism and critical theory, namely the critical method called *deconstructionism*.

Deconstructionism is based on the notion that language is continually undercutting itself. In every language structure, or text, whenever one group of elements suggests one interpretation, other elements in the same text suggest other, contradictory interpretations. In this manner the possibilities of a text are endless, the final meaning of the text undecidable. Ultimately this suggestiveness is a consequence of the nature of language. Deconstructionism asserts that language is not exclusively referential, that language refers not to reality but back to language: the definition of a word is more words, each of which are defined by more words, and so on. Deconstructionism calls this property of language *textuality*. Vincent B. Leitch elaborates this notion of textuality:

Language is the (prison) house of being; it is constitutive of reality so that it has no actual—but only supposed—origin. Our world is text, irreducibly. Nothing stands behind. Originally and at once, language is both “referential” since it signifies literal reality and “rhetorical” since it constructs fictions through figures. . . . Conceived as simply referential, language is undermined by textuality, that is, by the absence of actual extralinguistic origin and by the play of rhetorical figures. . . . All reading practiced as though language were only referential is misreading. (Leitch, pp. 21, 22)

Another critical concept in deconstructionism, one closely linked with textuality, is *freeplay*. In a traditional analysis a text is considered to be organized around a center, a theme or structure of some kind abstracted from the text which would serve to balance, anchor, and control the text, and to which everything in the text relates. Freeplay is the absence of the center, the lack of a controlling force in the text. From a deconstructive perspective a text plays around a non-center, around the absence of a controlling force. The movement of freeplay is the movement of *supplementarity*, the substitution of the endless textual possibilities for an absolute orientation.

The applications of deconstructive theory to Euclidean geometry become clearer when we recall Leitch’s statement: “Our world is text, irreducibly.” This is a key equation in contemporary criticism. In the context of the preceding discussion the statement which began this paper, “Until the 19th century, Euclidean geometry held the position of a privileged text in the discourse of

Western thought,” can be seen in a new light. Euclidean geometry’s privileged position was due to its assumed referentiality, its centeredness. Euclid’s axioms, theorems and definitions were supposed (by Euclid and everyone else) to be factual statements about the real world. What Euclidean geometry stood in need of for 2000 years, and what Gauss, Bolyai, Lobachevsky and Riemann finally provided it in the 19th century, was a thorough deconstruction.

Euclid’s *Elements* unified the work of many individuals and schools, constituting “the mathematical history of an age as well as the logical presentation of geometry” (Kline, p. 42). In this respect one of Euclid’s greatest achievements was in making geometry a formal axiomatic system. An axiomatic system is one in which a small number of statements called axioms are accepted uncritically and are used to logically derive a comparatively large number of statements which are called theorems. Theorems thus “proved” with recourse to axioms can be used to derive further theorems. Euclid and his followers considered these axioms to be self-evident statements about the physical world. The system of theorems logically derived from self-evident truths thus had a special, double claim to truth.

The problem with Euclid’s geometry which eventually led to its deconstruction lay in two of the ten axioms on which it was based. These two axioms state that (1) “a line segment can be extended as far as one pleases in either direction,” and (2) that “through a point *P* not on a line *L* there passes one and only one line *M* (in the plane of *P* and *L*) that does not meet *L*, no matter how far *M* and *L* are extended.” (Kline, pp. 410-411) Morris Kline suggests that these axioms are problematic because Euclid expected his axioms to be accepted on the basis of experience of the real world (Kline, p. 411), in deconstructionist terminology, on the basis of their referentiality. Harold Wolfe agrees that the parallel axiom (2, above) at least “does not seem to possess to any extent that characteristic of being ‘self-evident.’” (Wolfe, p. 19) Euclid was apparently aware that the parallel axiom was not on firm footing since he refrained as long as possible from using it in his proofs. According to Kline:

He is equally cautious about the unlimited extensibility of the straight line. . . . he uses line segments . . . but never supposes that he has an infinite straight line to start with. When necessary he extends a segment in either direction only as far as the theorem requires. (Kline, p. 411)

This is apparently the only tacit commentary Euclid has left us on these two axioms. Kline is quick to point out that Euclid’s treatment of them does not necessarily imply that he doubted the truth of these axioms: “rather, because of their seemingly weighty implications, he would have preferred, no doubt, to derive their contents as consequences of simpler axioms.” (Kline, p. 411)

If Euclid was silent on his two questionable axioms, then he was probably in the minority of mathematical thinkers during the 2000 years following the appearance of *The Elements*. By all accounts there were several hundred serious attempts either to prove the parallel axiom from the other, undisputed axioms or to find a less questionable substitute for it. The axiom on the infinite extensibility of line segments seems to have been more or less overshadowed by the greater “scandal” of the parallel axiom. It is amazing in retrospect but predictable in light of Euclidean geometry’s privileged position that all of these attempts to prove or replace the parallel axiom failed. That all of these efforts should fail, either by virtue of a logical fallacy of proof or by an implied assumption of the parallel axiom itself, is testimony to the immense power of a habit of thought: the physical referentiality of Euclidean geometry.

It was almost exactly 2000 years after *The Elements* that the first break in the repetitive pattern of failed proofs occurred in the form of another, though different, failure. In the early 18th century Gerolamo Saccheri set out like so

many had before him to somehow correct the parallel axiom. Saccheri's distinction, however, was to attempt a proof of the controversial axiom by *reductio ad absurdum*. This method of proof assumes hypothetically that the proposition to be proved is false. If a contradiction is reached then the original proposition is assumed to be true. Saccheri considered two variations on Euclid, which correspond to what eventually become Lobachevskian and Riemannian geometries.

Because he followed Euclid's assumption that a straight line could be extended infinitely, Saccheri was able to prove the parallel axiom from one of two converse assumptions. The other converse would not yield any contradiction, however, and according to Wolfe:

After a long sequence of propositions, corollaries, and scholia, many of which were to become classical theorems in Non-Euclidean Geometry, Saccheri concluded lamely that the hypothesis leads to the absurdity that there exist two straight lines which, when produced to infinity, merge into one straight line and have a common perpendicular at infinity. (Wolfe, p. 32)

One hundred years later, however, three men appeared at roughly the same time who were, though to varying degrees, ready to break a 2000-year-old habit. Karl Gauss, Johann Bolyai, and Nicholas Lobachevsky were the first mathematicians to set about dispassionately exploring the logical consequences of a new parallel axiom which did not simply rephrase the old version but which contradicted it. Gauss began by trying to replace the parallel axiom with a simpler one. Failing that, he followed Saccheri and attempted to prove the axiom by contradiction. When he found no contradiction, however, he did not retreat as Saccheri had. He continued, finding a logically consistent system different from Euclid's and concluded that "there can be other geometries as valid as Euclid's." (Kline, p. 413) Although Gauss was apparently the first person with the personal courage to reach this conclusion he lacked the courage to make it public in the face of the overwhelmingly Euclidean character of the times. His work on the parallel axiom was not published until after his death.

It was Bolyai and Lobachevsky who finally began the dangerous task of publicly deconstructing Euclid. Within several years of each other, both men published work dealing with a consistent geometry in which there exists an infinite set of parallels through a given point not on a given line though on the same plane. Their work had very little impact within their lifetimes, partially as a result of resistance to it but mainly due to slow international communications and to the fact that Bolyai wrote initially in Hungarian and Lobachevsky in Russian. At any rate, the limited response to their work was such that Bolyai became discouraged and published no more on his new geometry. Lobachevsky was eventually dismissed from his teaching position. Nevertheless, their deconstruction of Euclidean Geometry had begun its work and would in the end necessitate not only a rethinking of Euclid but of the notion of mathematical truth as well. However, they had not entirely freed themselves from unconscious Euclidean assumptions. Both Bolyai and Lobachevsky failed to question the axiom on the infinite extensibility of a line segment. It was left to Bernhard Riemann several years later to complete the deconstruction they had begun. Rather than Euclid's single parallel or Bolyai's and Lobachevsky's infinite parallels, Riemann assumed there to be no parallels to any given line. In place of a line segment infinitely extensible in either direction, Riemann defined a line as infinite but bounded. Any line passing through a point not on the first line will intersect the first at exactly two points.

As these new geometries gradually received greater attention it became apparent that their existence required major changes in mathematical thinking. Since the new geometries accepted certain of Euclid's original ten axioms and were logically consistent, this implied that the old parallel axiom could not be deduced from those same axioms which had formerly been exclusively Euclidean. It was proved that the truth of Euclid's parallel axiom could not be proved by contradiction. The realization slowly set in that geometries other than Euclid's were possible. Most important of all, though, was the new understanding of axiomatic systems and of mathematical truth which resulted from the new geometries. Axioms became assumptions rather than self-evident truths. Theorems became conditional statements of mathematical logic based on the redefined axioms. As Kline says, "The creation of non-Euclidean geometry cut a devastating swath through the realm of truth." (Kline, p. 429)

Mathematical truth, once the surest of truths, became an "if-then" affair based on assumptions neither true nor false, but arbitrary. This was the final deconstruction of Euclidean geometry, or rather of geometry, since the new status of axiomatic systems held for the non-Euclidean as well as the Euclidean varieties. Geometrical freeplay is the play of arbitrarily chosen axioms around the absent center (mathematics as a repository of truth). Textuality in this case is the non-referentiality of axioms to anything but the logical relations (freeplay) between them. The fall of Euclidean geometry also has a place in the philosophical and intellectual history of the 19th and 20th centuries, a sequence of successive deconstructions through Darwin, Einstein, Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger, Dada and Surrealism, and culminating in the contemporary critical theory which takes the name of deconstructionism.

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RHETORIC AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

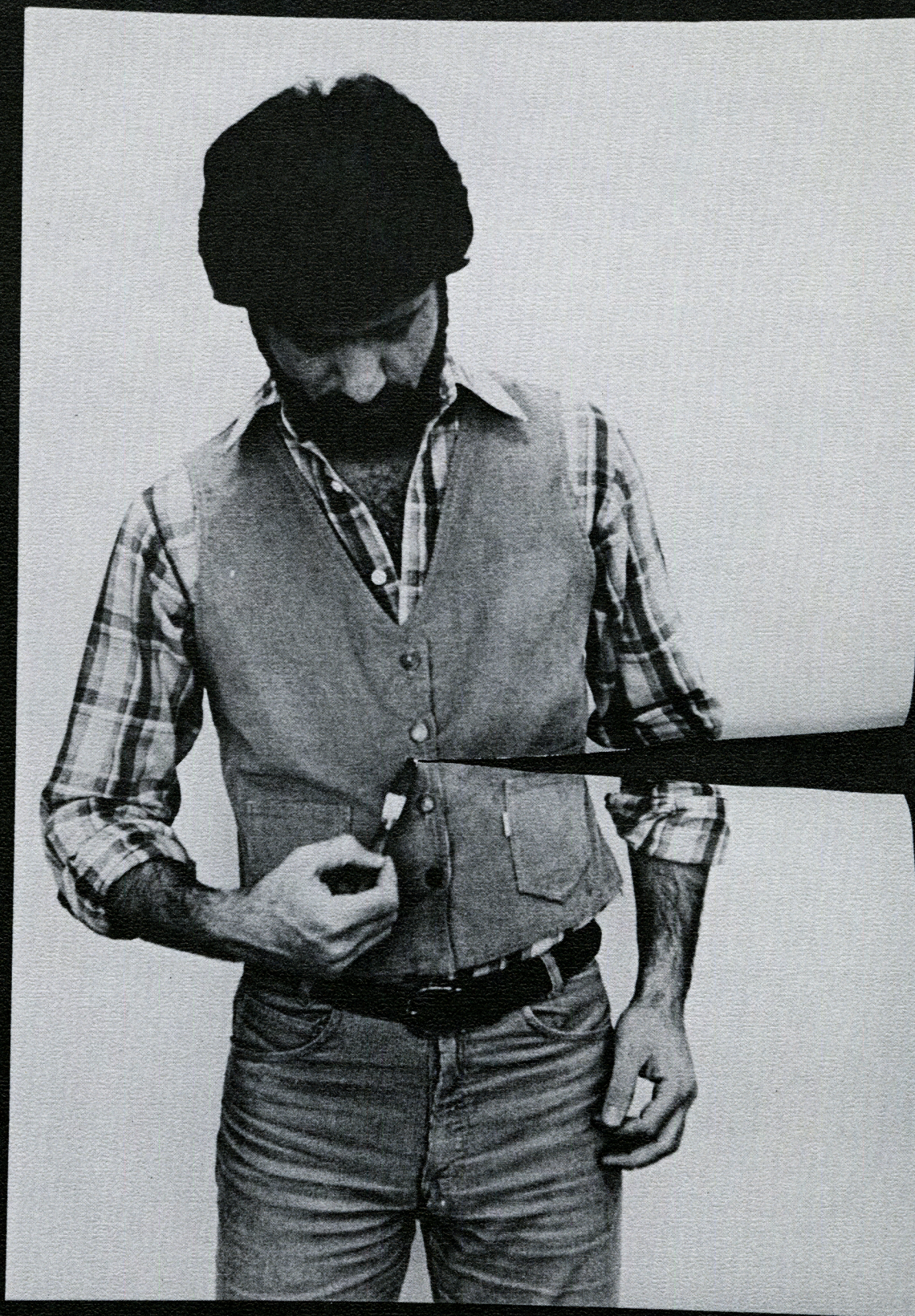
When you step you become
the threshold of what you are
becoming,
a metaphor scribbled in the margins
of some notebook.

You dreamt the other night
you got in a fight with the word
solipsism.
It bloodied your nose and twisted your arm.

In their turns you've taken on
all the words that taunt you:
perriwinkle, cicada, lintel.

Or you become a door with
creaking hinges that opens
to a bedroom where sooner or later.

DAVID BREITKOPF



HOOSHANG KAZEMI — UNTITLED

SOUTH JAMES COUNTY

Old men in the sideyards wave
at strangers. The flea market
still stays open on Sundays.
Go inside — an eighty-year-old woman
tries to sell you beer bottles, bruised
felt portraits of Elvis, pecans.
She doesn't hear too well until you buy.
Her sons own the salvage dump outside,
WE BUY JUNK BATTERIES.
When it snows children steal
a car hood to sled in. The only
other business is a store: newcomers
stare at the stuffed bobcat
on the Coke machine — a female
caught by trappers out for muskrat
in the hollow. The storekeeper
dips snuff, spits into a tomato can
beneath the counter. His brother
is the butcher. They take your check
without question. Spring comes slowly.
Warblers with songs too high
for human ears pass through
the wide willow oaks. Frogs
raise a ruckus after rain.
A garbage bag still hangs from a beech
by the creek, filled with the bones
of young cats. By summer,
lime dust and red clay rise in waves.
People die from heat in houses
no one sees from the road, their names
spread like poverty grass. Relatives
save obituaries. On porches, women train
scarlet runnerbeans and morning glories
to grow up cotton strings. Boys wait
till dark, toss bread dough
up for bats. On Wednesday night,
church supper; Friday, a horse auction
and a baseball game. Movies wait
across the state line. You can't say
why you don't leave. It has something
to do with brush fires, high rows
of hickory cane corn, a man
waving you in for a drink
called scuppernong gold.

JEANNE PERRY



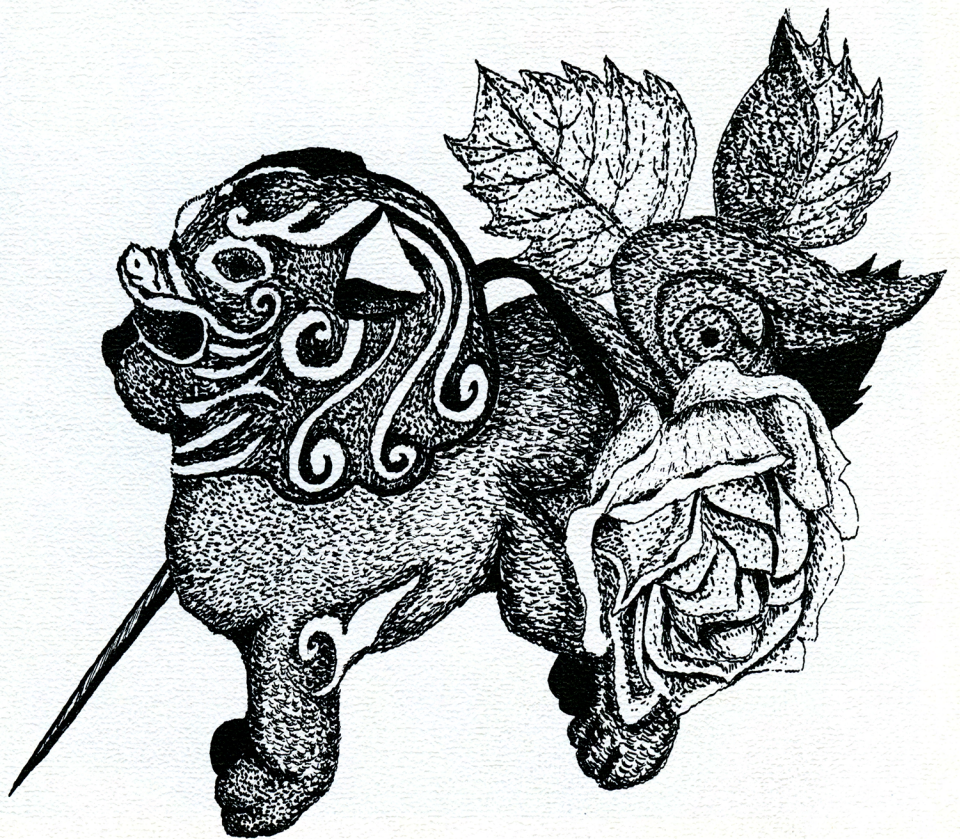
ANN NICHOLS — MOON OVER MISSOURI

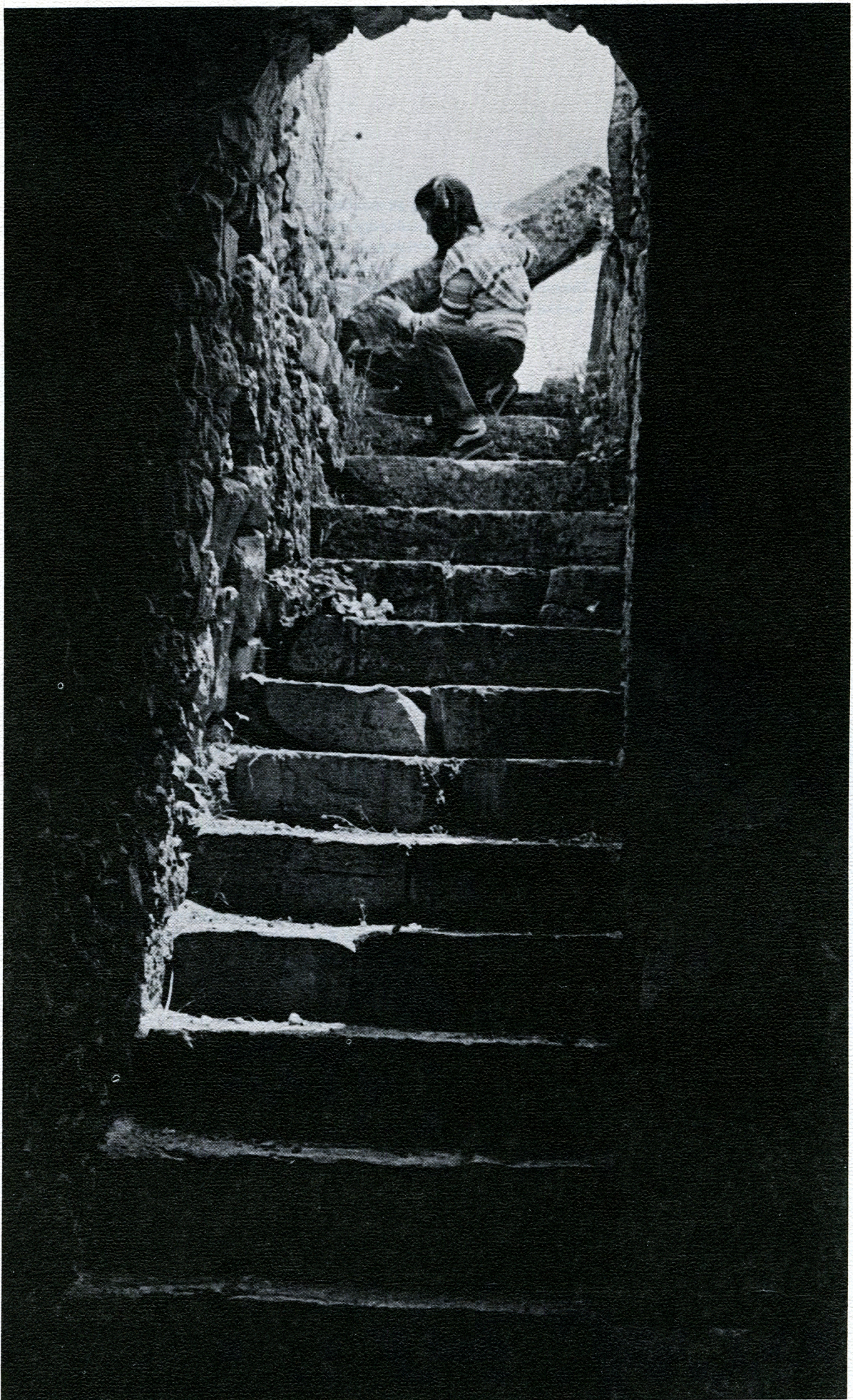
HONORABLE MENTION

THE REED FLUTE

You will know the difference
when you hear the music,
for notes have a way of clinging to the wounded wood,
remembered, like the green scent of crushed ferns
in spring forests,
and when the piper plays
his breath is wind in the wood
and the wind is the ache of the old scar
that bled fresh on ancient hills
where dark haired girls danced for Aphrodite,
and the wind is a wreath of yellow flowers,
woven like winter stars through the bare branches of willows
where its song echos like the shadow of water
over smooth stones in a dry creekbed,
and the echo ripples out in ever-widening circles
as remembered, as forgotten
as the blade
that made the wrinkle in the reed.

TERRY KRAUSE





Editor's Note — The Staff would like to thank all contributors for the high quality of their work. Choosing the prize winners was extremely difficult. No prize was given for a Short Story due to lack of submissions in that category. Honorable Mention goes to Brenda Davis, whose colorful paintings were excellent; we were unable to print her work due to limited space and funds. All prizes were chosen by the Editor. The entire staff would like to thank Bruce Wallace and Richard Jackson for their interest and support. Special thanks to Robert Vallier.

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WRITING CONCENTRATION

The English Departments' Concentration in Writing at UTC is comprised of basic courses in creative, expository, or critical writing. Interested students have the opportunity to work on *The Poetry Miscellany*, the *Sequoia Review*, and on the English Department's *English Bulletin*; to meet with writers who visit the university; and, for qualified students, to work on a Departmental Honors project in Creative Writing. There are also numerous opportunities for informal tutorials. Several students have recently had poems published in other publications and some have elected to continue their work in MFA Programs after graduation.

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